

**Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw**  
**November 25, 2011**

I happened to be thinking the other day about the strides accomplished in our technological world. We truly live in a time of convenience, speed and innovation. Although most agree the times are exciting, the times are also challenging and can be a bit overwhelming. Young people today certainly benefit from the ability to quickly gain information, communicate instantly and store data in a device the size of one's thumb. However, despite the temptation to run at 100% all the time, you've got to slow down once in a while.

Regardless of one's age, anyone using the Internet should follow a few safety precautions. The Internet opens your world up to the entire world, a place that's not always so safe. Common crimes associated with the Internet include unwanted correspondence, improper materials, identity theft and numerous kinds of scams. No age group or social classification is exempt and scams are becoming more numerous than ever. Fortunately, more and more people are recognizing the warning signs and avoiding costly mistakes. Here are a few tips to follow as you or your children surf the Internet.

- Never give out your password or personal information
- Do not send your picture to or agree to meet face to face with someone you've met online
- Computers used by children should be kept where parents can monitor activity
- Be sure to install anti-virus protection software
- Share computer activities with children and encourage communication so they let you know when they encounter something uncomfortable

No one should be afraid to venture into the world-wide-web; it's an amazing addition to our lifestyle. You've just got to be careful as you travel along.

Amesbury Police and law enforcement agencies across the area are seeing some patterns with the scams being reported lately.

- If you receive a correspondence from someone after you've posted an item for sale and they want to send you extra money, it's a scam.
- If you are asked to send money via Western Union, it's a scam.
- If there is any mention of a foreign country, it's a scam.
- If someone has money and wants to give it to you because they are ill, it's a scam.
- If you've won a sweepstakes or lottery, but do not recall entering or are asked to send a fee or tax to claim your winnings, it's a scam.
- Finally, if it just seems too good to be true, it's a scam.

Many of the current scams are twists on ones used for decades, just tailored to fit the times. Take a moment to consider the offer or request and ask if it may be real. The few moments you spend doing a little research could save you a lot of time and money in the end. Unfortunately, many of these scams are nearly impossible to solve, despite what appears to be good evidence. Many originate in foreign countries where the perpetrators operate without a fear of being held responsible.

The annual Drug Take Back Day was held on October 29<sup>th</sup> and 91 pounds of medications were collected for disposal in Amesbury. In case you missed the opportunity to clean out your medicine cabinet, a kiosk has been placed in the front lobby of the police station. Unwanted, expired and unused prescription and over the counter medications may be dropped off at any time. No needles, IV drugs or medical instruments can be accepted.

Finally, as I put the final touches on this edition of Watchwords, I've just finished shoveling my driveway, thanks to the Halloween weekend nor'easter. The winter parking ban takes effect on December 1<sup>st</sup> and continues until the first of April, regardless of the weather conditions. Vehicles cannot be parked on city streets or in Municipal lots between 1:00 and 7:00 am, so please make arrangements now. Residents of the downtown area may obtain a parking permit from the Clerk's Office at Town Hall, which allows overnight parking in the Friend Street lot or Water Street Lower Deck.